

Creating Inclusive Work Environments for Youth with Learning Disabilities

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Workshop Agenda

- Introductions
- Setting the Stage- LD and Work
- Strategic Workplace Learning
- Individual Development Strategies
- Disclosure and Accommodations

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LD Statistics

- 15% of the U.S. population, or one in seven Americans, has some type of learning disability, according to the National Institutes of Health
- However only 7-8% of students are identified as having LD under IDEA
- Constitute over half of students receiving special education services

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Learning Disabilities...

- A learning disability is a neurological disorder.
- There is a difference in the way individuals with LD brains are "wired."
- They may be as smart or smarter than their peers.
- They may have difficulty reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

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Learning Disabilities...

- Can't be cured
- Impact individuals differently in different environments (classrooms vs. work places)
- Need supports and accommodations that are customized to the individual and the setting

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Indications of Possible LD

- Short attention span
- Poor memory
- Difficulty following directions
- Inability to discriminate letters, numerals, sounds
- Poor reading and/or writing ability
- Eye-hand coordination problems
- Difficulties with sequencing
- Disorganization and other sensory difficulties
- Difficulty reading social cues

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"Successful" People with LD

- Chuck Close, Artist
- Tommy Hilfiger, Clothes Designer
- Whoopi Goldberg, Actress
- Greg Louganis, Diver and AIDS advocate
- John Morgan, PGA Champion
- John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems
- Charles Schwab, Founder and Chair of brokerage company
- Erin Brockovich, Environmental Activist
- Gavin Newsom, Mayor
- Delos Cosgrove, MD, CEO Cleveland Clinic
- John Irving, Author

More on Learning Disabilities

- People with learning disabilities achieve success by accentuating their strengths, knowing their weaknesses, and learning strategies for dealing with specific difficulties.
- We focus supports in three areas:
 1. Strategic Workplace Learning
 2. Individual Development Strategies
 3. Disclosure and Accommodations

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A Few Words About Disability & Time

- Internally, a disability is about an individual's sensory, cognitive, emotional, or physical impairment.
- Environmentally, a disability is society's decision that a skill is deficient because of the length of time it takes to complete a task.

Universal Design for Learning— 3 Principles

- An approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation.
 - *Multiple means of representation*, to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge,
 - *Multiple means of expression*, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know,
 - *Multiple means of engagement*, to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation.

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Strategy Instruction

- Involves teaching the young person about learning strategies, and about how and when to use particular strategies.
- Includes increasing the young person's ability to engage in self-regulated planning, monitoring, and evaluating of their own learning

We believe that the most effective way to facilitate learning for all learners is by combining direct instruction (lecture, discussion, book learning) with strategy instruction

Strategy Instruction Teaching Techniques

- Teach important skills
- Teach less better
- Teach explicitly
- Teach contextually
- Explain what is to be learned and why it is important
- Check the old before teaching the new

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Example of a Strategy Intervention

DEFENDS is the acronym for a strategic approach that helps secondary students write a composition in which they must take a position and defend it. Each letter stands for a strategic step, as follows:

Decide on audience, goals, and position
Estimate main ideas and details
Figure best order of main ideas and details
Express the position in the opening
Note each main idea and supporting points
Drive home the message in the last sentence
Search for errors and correct

Strategies—Environment that Promotes Learner/Worker Independence

Guide youth to be active and independent by asking such questions as

- So, how would you do that?
- How would you find that information?
- How would you remember that information?
- How did you figure that out?

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Individual Development Strategies

Individual development strategies focus on processes, techniques, and practices that build skills in *aspects of identity*

- a sense of safety and structure
- high self-worth and self esteem
- feeling of mastery and future
- belonging and membership
- perception of responsibility and autonomy
- a sense of self-awareness and spirituality

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Taking Control of One's Life- A Key Factor in Employment Success for People with Disabilities

Internal Decisions

- Desire (taking a stand and making a decision to move ahead)
- Goal orientation (setting explicit goals to work toward)
- Reframing (reinterpreting the learning disability experience from something negative to something positive)

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Taking Control of One's Life

External Manifestations (or how the person adapts)

- Persistence (willingness to sacrifice and persevere toward goals)
- Goodness of fit (finding environments where their strengths are optimized and weaknesses minimized)
- Learned creativity (creating strategies and techniques to enhance the ability to perform well)
- Social ecologies (seeking and utilizing the support of helpful people)

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Developing Interpersonal Skills

- Interpreting and responding appropriately to the behavior and communications of others;
- Interpreting subtle, non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice that provide feedback on work performance;
- Making figurative and metaphorical interpretations of events and dialogue in the social context of the interaction and taking "kidding" for what it is;

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Developing Interpersonal Skills

- Exhibiting social competency and emotional maturity by engaging in appropriate interactions with peers and supervisors;
- Working collaboratively with others;
- Accepting supervisory monitoring and criticism;
- Understanding acceptable types and levels of personal interaction.

(From: Rehabilitation Services Administration)

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Disclosure and Accommodations

- Disclosure—youth should decide when and how much to tell others, and understand how their disability affects their capacity to learn and/or perform effectively; they should also be “aware” ...
- Accommodations—youth should be empowered to determine what environmental adjustments, supports, and services they need in order to access, participate and excel in school, at work, and in the community.

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Strategies--Disclosure

- Factors to weigh before disclosure
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- Differences between school and work settings
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- 411 Guide on Disclosure

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Once a disability is disclosed, an individual with a disability should be able to answer these questions:

- What exactly is your disability?
- How will your learning disability impact your productivity?
- What does learning disability or dyslexia mean?
- If we need to train you on specific job functions, how do you learn best?
- What kinds of modifications do you need in your work environment?
- What are some of your past successes in team work?
- How can you best be efficient on the job?
- What are some of your past successes in leading others?
- What reasonable accommodations do you need?
- Why and how do you see them as 'reasonable'?

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Assessing the Organization (Employer) and the Job

- On-site assessment of the immediate work environment
- Analysis of the fundamental duties (essential functions), tasks, and job competencies needed;
- Basic appraisal of the organizational environment and culture;
- Assessment of the learning environment
- Inventory of available technology, training, materials, and staff resources.

Resources

- NCWD/Youth: www.ncwd-youth.info
- ODEP: www.dol.gov/odep
- Job Accommodations Network (JAN): <http://askjan.org>
- Jennifer Kemp
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